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Answering the Call to Action: COVID-19 Curriculum Design by Students for Students

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To the editor: COVID-19 came barreling towards medical education in early 2020, knocking over the pillars that supported clinical education and leaving hordes of medical trainees without the traditional education we had come to know and expect. Virtual delivery of the curriculum became a demand, not a request, with the Association of American Medical Colleges strongly suggesting against patient contact for medical students on March 17, 2020. This announcement left many to wonder how their future clinical experiences would be shaped by this pandemic. At Indiana University (IU) School of Medicine, a cohort of 13 medical students found a way to get us back on track.

In a 3-week period, this group of third- and fourth-year medical students, including ourselves, developed a comprehensive core curriculum course covering the fundamentals of COVID-19 to equip students with the tools needed to adapt to the ever-changing landscape created by the pandemic. The course covers everything from basic sciences, public policy, and patient care to wellness during a global health crisis. In-person content delivery was transformed to virtual small group sessions, online modules, and live webinar discussions covering a real COVID-19 patient case, public health, and evidence-based medicine. Notably, the course emphasized collaboration across levels of medical training by combining both third- and fourth-year learners in small groups and delivered content to over 700 students simultaneously, both firsts for the curriculum at IU School of Medicine.

Accelerated development of this Fundamentals of COVID-19 course created a unique opportunity for faculty and students to come together in curricular design. This experience was transformative for the 13-student cohort, a majority of whom came into the experience with no formal training in curriculum design. As students, we intuitively recognized the importance of balancing asynchronous and synchronous learning to maximize students' educational experience,

providing the flexibility needed to accommodate unstable board exam studying schedules, unpredictable life events, and family emergencies—a course completely designed by students for students.

COVID-19 derailed many of our traditional plans, educational experiences, and celebrations.

However, as resilient individuals, we sought to create better learning environments for our colleagues and future learners. This experience has laid bare how deeply committed we and our classmates are to serving our communities as leaders, educators, and future physicians. When our foundation was pummeled, we answered the call to innovate together.